



Photo by Pirm Van Hemmen

Phil Thomas, president of the Woodson Foundation, in his Newark office

Clockwise from far right, top: Thuli Dumakude and the Thokoza Singers appear at Essex County College on April 28 as part of the Onstage in New Jersey series; the a cappella singing group Take 6 performs at Rosa Parks Fine Arts High School in Paterson on May 22; Broadway veterans Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee represent blacks in the theater arts during upcoming programs



EBONY AND IVY

Newark-based agency waves black arts banner on stage, in school

By VALERIE SUDOL

Black History Month is over now, but the work of the Carter G. Woodson Foundation goes on. Named to honor the founder of Black History Month, celebrated each February, the Newark-based organization is devoted year-round to carrying the banner for

Among the very few agencies in the nation devoted exclusively to promoting black talent (if not the only one), the foundation has rapidly expanded during the past four years to encompass three separate touring projects and an extensive in-school program. In 1985, the foundation reported a budget of \$35,000; last year, that figure topped \$385,000.

"I've been called the Sol Hurok of black culture," said Philip Thomas, foundation president. "I don't know if that's on target. But it's true that there's a need out there for some kind of organization that can supply cultural enrichment programs with a black emphasis. And that's our mission."

That part of the "mission" that has to do with representing African-American artists is burgeoning. The foundation has booked its stable of artists for a total of 64 performances between January and June of this year.

The "Black Culture on Tour" program, as it is known, includes 38 dates in New Jersey, largely concentrated in northern counties, and 26 programs in other states. New York, Pennsylvania and Connecticut are represented, as anyone might expect. But Woodson programs also are being presented this year in Virginia, Delaware and Maryland, New Mexico, Nevada and Michigan, Florida, Texas and Rhode Island.

"The key to success with the touring program is having artists of the highest quality," said Thomas, who spends frequent evenings in the theater to preview groups. "Their program content has to be consistent with our mission, and they have to have experience in the mechanics of touring. I'd say about 30 percent of our artists are New Jersey based."

Offering a great deal of variety, the foundation promotes programs of theatre, dance, music, film and literary arts.

"Special Attractions" offered for tour dates are among the most popular. The a cappella quintet "Sweet Honey in the Rock," a program entitled "Scott Joplin and Ragtime America" and a concert of music and folktales called "Yeh! Cric, Yeh! Crac" are heavily booked this season.

Poets, writers and speakers feature Paul Robeson Jr., son of the noted actor, on civil rights; Gil Noble, producer

of ABC-TV's Emmy Award-winning public affairs series "Like It Is" on broadcast journalism, and Dr. La Francis Rodgers-Rose, president of the International Black Women's Congress on women's issues.

Theater evenings might pair audiences with James M. Brown's "Yes, God Is Real" or Lewis Cole's "Do Lord Remember Me" based on oral histories of ex-slaves. But other artists in the program are Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee, Broadway veterans who also host public television's "Ossie and Ruby Present," and Vinnie Burrows, who appears in a series of one-woman shows.

Among dance troupes are Philadelphia's Ailey-inspired Philadanco, two African troupes and the Okra Dance Company, which traces many contemporary social dances to their African roots. The music category offers five gospel groups, two New Jersey choral organizations (the Newark Boys Chorus and the North Jersey Philharmonic Glee Club) and international jazz stars Carrie Smith, Steve Colson and Abbey Lincoln Moscka.

But Thomas isn't quite satisfied that he's covered all the stylistic bases. He's anxious to add classical music to the bill of fare, and plans to give audiences programs of chamber music and opera — by black artists.

"We're trying to develop a committed audience for our cultural events, but it's not just the black audience we're aiming at," Thomas said. "Black, white, Hispanic everyone can appreciate good programming when they see it. We associate ourselves with people who are good artists first, and black artists only by coincidence."

But how many people actually know that there are black musicians presenting chamber programs, and black singers appearing in opera productions? Thomas said that in presenting such groups, he hopes to break through stereotypes suggesting that black artists are only concerned with jazz, gospel and "ethnic" art forms.

Unlike the tours, for which the organization serves as booking agent, the separate "Onstage in New Jersey" series is one that the foundation itself presents in rented facilities throughout the state. Running from March 23 through May 25, the subscription series (see box) offers some of Woodson's best acts, and a few "specials" like the Opera Ebony program May 6 at the Newark Museum, and a May 22 concert in Paterson by Take Six, the hot gospel sextet featured in Spike Lee's "Do the Right Thing."

Still another Woodson project is a shorter summertime series produced with Symphony Hall in Newark. "Outdoors at Noon" offers free lunchtime entertainment downtown in Brownstone Park. African dancers, puppet theater, dance, music and storytelling

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Above, Philadanco appears March 28 in Lincoln, Pa., as part of the Black Culture On Tour program that reaches 13 states; below, the Newark Boys Chorus, one of two Jersey choral groups featured; below right, Sweet Honey in the Rock will sing in concerts on March 23 at the State Theatre, New Brunswick, March 24 at Essex County College, and March 25 at Montclair State College



MUSIC IN JERSEY**Hugh Wolff, Jersey Symphony enthrall audience in 'Classical Top Ten' concert**

By MICHAEL REDMOND

Hugh Wolff and the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra will be returning to Carnegie Hall on Saturday with a program that clearly aims to compel a redefinition of the orchestra's image across the Hudson, in the Emerald City of Oz.

Absent from the program are any works that New York would expect to hear from some decent little orchestra just arrived from boondocks country.

Not only are all three works on the program indisputable masterpieces, each of the three is a powerful virtuoso work. None of them would be found on anybody's list of the Classical Top Ten.

It is a pleasure to report that musical standards were the least of Hugh Wolff's problems. Not only did the New Jersey Symphony play Berlioz, Mahler, and Lutoslawski with style, the orchestra provided precisely the right style in each case. Performance standards proved to be remarkably high.

Simply put, one doubts that the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra has ever played so well, and so consistently well, at any point in its history.

What problems Wolff did have to face in presenting this program were of other orders of concern.

First, the unpredictable order: Ben Holt, the brilliant young American baritone, was to have sung all performances of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, culminating in the Carnegie Hall performance.

But an injury forced Holt to withdraw, leaving Wolff in the unenviable position of (1) having to scramble for a baritone of like quality, (2) on short notice, (3) for one of the most demanding works in any baritone's concert repertoire, (4) to be performed in full view of the New York music scene.

Less gifted baritones than Kevin McMillan would certainly have demurred, but not this hearty Canadian. McMillan made his debut with the New Jersey Symphony in a Garden State

The New Jersey Symphony Orchestra; Hugh Wolff conducting. Berlioz 'Le Corsaire' Overture; Mahler's *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* with Susan Graham, mezzo soprano, and Kevin McMillan, baritone; Witold Lutoslawski's Concerto for Orchestra (1954). Performed on Sunday in Newark Symphony Hall. To be repeated on Saturday at 8 p.m. in Carnegie Hall, New York City.

Arts Center "Carmina Burana," and he just walked away with that performance. It appears that Hugh Wolff's memory is as good as his ear.

The other problem is the "home team" problem.

The New Jersey Symphony's subscribers are intelligent, sophisticated, and loyal folks. Without their loyalty, this orchestra would have gone belly-up on a number of occasions.

But if the subscribers have ever demonstrated outside the orchestra's offices demanding to hear Lutoslawski's Concerto for Orchestra, this is news to me. Even *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, with its morbid and lurid resonances, is not exactly a day at the beach for concertgoers of conservative tastes.

In any case, it is also a pleasure to report that the Newark Symphony Hall audience received this program not only politely, but with every evidence of enthusiasm. But then, this performance, and especially the Lutoslawski, was the sort to drive all obstacles out of its path.

In Jack Sullivan's incisive view, the songs of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* form "a kind of collective unconscious in Mahler's art, from which he continually drew inspiration." That's so good I wish it were mine.

For a card-carrying Mahlerite, sitting through *Wunderhorn* is like having a mystical experience. Time stands still. Past, present, and future hold hands in a circle around you, playing "Ring Around the Rosy." You hear where Mahler came from, you hear where he was going. *Wunderhorn* sums

up the obsessions of late Romanticism and of Mahler himself, i.e., love and death.

Hugh Wolff and the orchestra gave a piant, idiomatic reading of Mahler's score, replete with chills, thrills, and swoons, but a curious emotional equilibrium prevailed throughout. This performance did not so much soar to the heights and plunge to the depths as create and sustain the mood of Mahler's special magical world.

Susan Graham sang beautifully, just beautifully, but she gave scant evidence of being what one might call a native-born citizen of Mahler's country. I am not referring to her German diction, which was good, but to her feeling for Mahler's emotional terrain, which seemed something generic and synthetic.

McMillan fared better on this score. His is a noble voice, with authentic-sounding German "ping" and heft. This baritone is also a remarkable actor, both in terms of vocal shadings and expressive emphases as well as facial expression. McMillan knows precisely where the line is drawn between acting and mugging.

It's sad that Polish concert music is so little known in the United States. Chopin doesn't really count in this discussion, despite the abundance of his polonaises and mazurkas. What is great about Chopin's music has more to do with individual genius than with national tradition.

In the 20th century, however, Poland can claim at least three composers who define the parameters of a distinctive national style, and they are all

Susan Graham
'Beautiful' singing

modernists: Karol Szymanowski, Witold Lutoslawski, and Krzysztof Penderecki. The order is not only chronological, but stylistic. Lutoslawski is very much the man in the middle between the sensuousness of Szymanowski and the abstraction of Penderecki, offering the best of both worlds.

Inspired by Bartok's masterpiece of the same name, Lutoslawski's Concerto for Orchestra exploded like a bomb in the 12-tone West.

The composer made free and highly personal use of his materials, serving up a heady brew of simple diatonic motifs, chromatic atonal counterpoint, harmonies with no visible means of support, Polish folk-inspired melodies, and polymetrical textures. Lutoslawski managed to offend and dazzle everybody simultaneously.

The concerto is variously brilliant, exciting, provocative, and profoundly moving. Wolff and the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra did this work better than justice: They gave a great performance to one of the great works of post-World War II modernism, and they are few.

One would be remiss not to note that Wolff conducted the Lutoslawski from memory. Come on, Maestro! Give us mere mortals a break.

German arias let soprano display wide vocal range

The New Philharmonic of New Jersey, Leon Hyman conducting. Haydn's Symphony No. 101 in D ('the Clock'); arias by Weber sung by Teresa Kubiak: *Ozean, du Ungeheuer*, from 'Oberon'; *Und ob die Wolken verhuelle, and Leise, leise*, from 'Der Freischutz'; Percy Grainger's arrangements of 'Shepherd's Hey' and 'Irish Tune from County Derry'; Bizet's *Jeux d'Enfant*, Op. 22. Performed on Sunday in the Levin Theater of the Jewish Community Center, West Orange.

By PAUL SOMERS

There is singing, and then there is singing. And that is what Teresa Kubiak did: Sing.

The soprano could have produced a series of Puccini favorites and this reviewer would have been in a mildly ecstatic state. But to hear her dramatically set out two great scenes surrounding a lovely cavatina, all by Carl Maria von Weber, put me in seventh heaven.

The technique of composing small segments of music, each matching the textual mood perfectly, the whole making a large but coherent solo, was brought to a new height by Weber. Indeed, as one listened to the two big scenes it became apparent that there is little difference between them and early Wagner in spite of the intervening 25-plus years.

Ozean, du Ungeheuer (Ocean, thou monster) from Act II of 'Oberon,' is one of the major tours de force for soprano, while the earlier *Leise, leise* (Softly, softly) from Act II of 'Der Freischutz' has equal standing. They both encompass the full range of vocal utterance from recitative-like declamation to melodic arioso, from quiet sustained lines to forceful athleticism.

Kubiak brought the same intensity to her interpretive and vocal powers in the small, hot, and acoustically dry Levin Theater as she would have at the cavernous Metropolitan Opera. The sheer size of her voice swept aside such problems as if they were mere trifles. Even her quiet passages were so focused that nothing was lost in diction or drama.

Though she has sung Puccini and Verdi throughout her career, this listener thinks of her as one of the mainstays of the German repertoire. In just these three excerpts she managed forcefully to restate the case for a Weber revival, and to remind this listener of the great hole that exists in New Jersey's operatic life. What a pleasure it was to hear some German opera in this state done with true authority!

The enthusiastic audience demanded and received an encore. The "Song to the Moon" from Dvorak's "Rusalka," sung exquisitely in Czech, acted as another reminder: It is time for someone to mount a major, large-house

Teresa Kubiak
Singing intensity

usually been working on music for a clock mechanism, and that there is some relationship between that music and the symphony.

The tempos were just right, the dynamics gauged to perfection. The flute solos of Svetlana Kabalin were effective, especially the rustic trio of the minuet.

If the auditorium was overly warm, the stage was downright broiling. Stoic males in the audience, this writer included, inexplicably retained their jackets. But on stage the men played in their shirt sleeves, one poor bassist finally removing even his tie.

A musically unfortunate result of the heat was the effect it had on intonation. Had the orchestra been given the opportunity to retune after the final Weber aria the subsequent music might have been more enjoyable.

Then again it might not have been: After the strong theatrical impact of the operatic scenes by Kubiak, there was no place to go with the program; it should have stopped, but on it went.

Percy Grainger's folk-song

MOVIE TIME**BERGEN**

BERGENFIELD CINEMA FIVE — Joe vs. the Volcano (PG) 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 8:00; — Mountains of the Moon (R) 1:00, 3:30, 5:45, 8:10; — Bad Influence (R) 1:45, 3:45, 5:45, 8:45; — Last of the Finest (R) 1:45, 3:45, 5:45, 8:45; — Nach Hause (PG-13) 2:30, 4:30, 6:30, 8:30.

HUDSON

ARLINGTON
LINCOLN — Hunt for Red October (PG) 8:00; — Bad Influence (R) 7:30, 9:30; — Joe vs. the Volcano (PG) 7:35, 9:35

GUTTENBERG

GALAXY — Enemies (R) 7:30, 9:45; — Stella (PG-13) 7:30, 9:30; — Born on the Fourth of July (R) 8:00

MONMOUTH

9-45
GENERAL CINEMA WOODBRIDGE — Joe vs. the Volcano (PG) 8:00, 10:00; — Hunt for Red October (PG) 7:15, 9:15

ATLANTIC HIGHLANDS

ATLANTIC HIGHLANDS
STRATHMORE — Steel Magnolias (PG) 7:30, 9:30; — Internal Affairs (R) 7:15, 9:15

house (PG-13) 7:25, 9:15
CLIFTON — Hunt for Red October (PG) 7:10, 9:30; — House Party (R) 7:20, 9:20; — Bad Influence (R) 7:15, 9:15; — Hard to Kill (R) 7:05, 9:10

HAWTHORNE
HAWTHORNE — Joe vs. the Volcano (PG) 7:20, 9:20; — Mountains of the Moon (R) 7:10, 9:35; — Driving Miss Daisy (PG) 7:25, 9:15; — Steel Magnolias (PG) 7:20, 9:25
PASSAIC
MONTAUK — Three adult XXXX features. Commences 12 a.m. midnight. Call 722-7448 for times